

Pastor Marcio Valadao attended the Day of Prayer in Jerusalem, while his 34,000-member church in Brazil was praying back home. "First of all, we believe it is a command in the Bible to pray for Jerusalem," he said. "Secondly, by obeying Him we want to bring joy to His heart. And third, when we bless the Jews, we are blessed in return."

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Introduction

This year the Jewish people began to celebrate Purim, the Feast of Esther, last night. The significance of this Biblical Feast is so timely to these days and to what is going on in Israel and the Middle East that Ari and Shira Sorko-Ram, leaders of a fellowship of believing Jews in Israel and I would like to share with you the story behind it.

The Feast of Purim is a commemoration of Jewish deliverance from the Persian Empire, which sought their annihilation. Persia today is the area of Iran including parts of Iraq and Afghanistan, formerly known as Babylon.

Modern Day Purim Celebration

Purim is celebrated with the children (and many adults) dressing up as the characters from the story of Esther (or other fancy dress).

The Purim story is read and sometimes reinacted, with the listeners "boo"ing and making noise with rattlers every time Haman's name is mentioned, cheering every time Mordechai's name is mentioned and sighing every time Esther's name is mentioned. It is considered to be the most fun and joyous feast of all.

There is also an exchange of small gifts (usually sweets), and the Official Feast Food is Haman's ears - a pastry dough in a shape of a triangle filled with fruit, nuts, chocolate and other sweet fillings

The Purim Story:

In the book of Esther (3:5-7) we read that Haman, the Prime Minister of Persia and enemy of the Jews, observed a certain Jewish man, Mordechai, who refused to bow before Haman or pay him homage, because he was a servant of God, and did not want to bow to anyone except to the Lord.

As a result of Mordechai's behaviour, Haman sought to destroy all of the Jews throughout the Persian Empire. He cast the lot (purim) to determine the day and month to destroy the Jews. It fell on the 13th day of Adar. Thus, Haman convinced Persian King Ahasuerus, to approve a plan to murder all the Jews in the kingdom on the determined day.

Esther was a Jewish girl, a relative of Mordechai, chosen by the King himself to be the queen of Persia. When she heard of the decree, she called for a 3-day fast to prepare herself to go before the king Xerxes (Esther 4:15-16).

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

This is a typical Jewish expression like "if it rains, it rains". Circumstances and what will happen are not really important. What is important is deciding what is right and doing what God wants. It is a sign of maturity to accept God's will – what happens to any individual is not what is most important. Here she signifies that she readily and cheerfully risked her life for the good of her people. If it was the pleasure of God, that she should lose her life, she was content, and would submit to his will. She left herself entirely in his hands, to dispose of her as he thought fit.

Esther knew that if she came before the king without him specifically calling for her, her life could only be spared if the king extended his sceptre to her. So, at the end of this fast, Esther went boldly before the king to plead for her life and the lives of her people but first she gives two dinner parties for the king before he gets her to say what she really wants.

Esther 7:3-4 **Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favour with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king. "**

Aside

Listen to what she said **If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king. "**

2007 marks 200 years since the passing of the act to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. As a nation we have been celebrating the life of William Wilberforce who campaigned for the abolition of the British slave trade with the film Amazing Grace. It will be on in Haverfordwest from Friday 23rd March. Freedom day is on Sunday the 25th.

The Purim Story continues:

Though the book does not mention God directly, we know that favour comes from Him, and Esther did find favour in the king's eyes. She was brought to the kingdom **"for such a time as this"**.

The king responded to Esther's plea and had Haman hung on the very gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai. Mordechai was raised to a high position in the government and was given the power to issue a counter decree that protected the lives of the Jews and gave them the right to defend themselves and destroy all who would attack them on the 13th day of Adar.

On this day and several days following, the Jews overpowered their enemies and gained their freedom. Thus the Feast of Purim, declaring their deliverance, was celebrated on the 13th, 14th and 15th days of Adar.

This year's celebration began last night.

Spiritual Fulfillment of Purim:

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, almost in every generation, there rose a people who wanted to destroy Jews and the memory of them from the face of the earth. But the Lord, in His mercy, and because He is a covenant keeping God, saved His people from trouble every time, even if only a remnant of them.

The spiritual fulfilment of the Feast of Purim is found in God's deliverance (salvation) that is completed in the Messiah. He is the Deliverer bringing joy and honour to His chosen, royal priesthood of believers.

The victory of the Jewish people in the book of Esther points to the victory of God over Satan.

Ultimately, Purim points to the preservation and redemption of God's people through the sacrifice of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ) on the cross at Calvary.

We must intercede for the Jewish people until they come into the fullness of this revelation and position.

Purim today:

There have been numerous attempts to destroy the Jewish people and today is no different. Today's "Haman," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, also of Persian descent, has openly declared his plans to wipe the State of Israel off the map.

Ahmadinejad is believed to fund Islamic terrorist groups such as Hizballah, Hamas and others, and supplies them with weapons and explosives to perpetrate suicide bombings and missile attacks against Israel.

May his plans come to naught as did Haman's.

They might because Rabbi David Batzri of Tel Aviv, Israel, has sought to enlist 10,000 Jewish children to pray at this time that God would annul the decree of the wicked Haman of our generation, and his plans for the destruction of the Jewish people,

And Michael D. Evans who heads the Jerusalem Prayer Team, has also called for 6 million Christian children worldwide plan to pray for the protection of the Jewish people against the Iranian nuclear threat. Because he says, "Christians should never forget the number of Jews who perished during the Holocaust.

"Never again must we allow a Holocaust," he said. "And since the young suffer most in times of catastrophe, it is fitting that children should be the ones praying."

The Rabbi, welcomed the initiative.

"Hopefully, it will awaken the entire world to the Iranian threat," he said. "If the goyim (not Jewish) have come to the realization that we are in danger, maybe the Jews in the Diaspora will finally wake up."

Conclusion:

At times like this, the story of Esther remains a source of great encouragement, giving all believers a sense of God's sovereignty, perfect timing and ultimate deliverance from those who seek their destruction.

Let us not be silent as nations rise against Israel and her people, but come boldly before the Throne of Grace, making our requests known to God.

But what is most important for the people of Israel and Wales today?

That the veil would be removed from the eyes of the people, that they may see Yeshua the Messiah!

Together, let us use our Spiritual weapons which are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

Let us intercede until the Lord **establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.** Isaiah 62:7

We may have been brought to the Kingdom **for such a time as this...**

Ari and Shira Sorko-Ram, end their letter.

We are confident, that the Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can save His chosen people from their enemies once again. This will take prayer and fasting of people, who love the Lord, love Israel and love the Jewish people.

Now, more than ever, Israel needs your prayers - for protection, deliverance, but most of all, revelation of her true Messiah, leading to salvation and, as Apostle Paul describes it, life from the dead. We believe and stand on the Lord's promise, that, one day, ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED!

Hag Purim Sameach - Happy Purim!

Ari and Shira Sorko-Ram